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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002000

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER BASRAH IP CHIEF MISSES OLD LIFE

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Greg D'Elia for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary: During a June 24 dinner, former Basrah IP Chief MG Jalil expressed frustration over his transfer to Baghdad. He credited the GOI offensive in March for improving security in Basrah, but predicted that JAM would regain its strength as the government shifted its attention elsewhere. Jalil lamented the influence of religion on contemporary Iraqi life and said Iraq needed strong, nationalist leaders, pointing to Sunni MPs Mithal al-Alusi and Saleh al-Mutlaq as examples. He urged the U.S. to establish permanent bases in Iraq as a check on Iran's regional ambitions. End Summary.

Pining for Basrah

¶2. (C) On June 24 former Basrah IP Chief MG Jalil Khalaif Shuwayl met Poloffs for a lengthy dinner at a restaurant in the International Zone (IZ). Asked about life post-Basrah, Jalil said that he was now working at the Ministry of Defense, but complained that he had still not been assigned an official post. "All they offered me were administrative positions, and I refused them," he said. He blamed the political parties for his predicament, saying "they all hate me because of my work in Basrah against the militias." Somewhat wistfully, he added, "I miss Basrah. We accomplished a lot there." When asked why General Mohan al-Faiji, his former boss and current MOD advisor, was not helping him find an operational command, Jalil responded that Mohan never did anything unless it benefited his own career.

Battle of Basrah Retrospective

¶3. (C) Jalil revealed that he had pressured the central government to intervene in Basrah by reporting to PM Maliki directly instead of to Governor Waeli. This ensured the PM had an immediate sense of the deteriorating situation, without any sugarcoating by provincial authorities. Asked why Maliki chose to invade Basrah in March, Jalil said ISCI pressured the PM into undertaking the operation as a way to undercut the strength of JAM and the Sadr Trend. Jalil conceded that the offensive initially went poorly for the ISF and that nearly 1,800 soldiers deserted from the Iraqi Army. "I always wanted the Americans in Basrah," he admitted. He credited the eventual success of ISF to the intervention of the Americans and Sadr's March 26 announcement telling his followers to lay down their arms. "If Sadr hadn't made that announcement," said Jalil, "we would have seen many more casualties." He predicted, however, that JAM would ultimately regain its strength as the government shifted its attention elsewhere.

Wishes for a Secular South

¶4. (C) Reminiscing about Basrah's past, Jalil related that as an army captain in the 1970s he used to drink beer in the evening "until I flew to the moon," then treat himself to a

large dinner with friends along the shore. "Religion had no impact on our lives back then," he said, "but now it is exactly the opposite, and that is why I hate the religious parties." Jalil said that Iraq needed nationalist, independent leaders, and offered as examples Sunni MPs and political independents Mithal al-Alusi and Saleh al-Mutlaq. He added that PM Maliki was at heart a nationalist, but under the sway of the religious parties and his inner circle of advisors. "I am a Shi'a," he said, "but even so I say the Shi'a parties are the biggest threat to Iraq." Jalil dismissed the idea of Fadilah and Iraqiyya forming a coalition, saying "Allawi is a secularist, and will join with other secularists and former Ba'athists. Fadilah's only option is to join with the Sadrists."

Need U.S. Bases in Iraq

¶5. (C) Turning to the subject of Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) negotiations, Jalil said that the U.S. should establish "a minimum of five" permanent military bases in Iraq, explaining that "America has sacrificed too much in Iraq, and it must establish bases to protect its investment."

Jalil disagreed that Iraqi public opinion was opposed to such a permanent presence, arguing that "Japan, Germany, Korea....all of these countries have bases." Elaborating on his point, he said "before, under Saddam, we lived with propaganda and we hated the Americans and above all Israel. But now that we have a chance to establish personal relations with Americans, we have changed our view, and now nobody cares about the issue of the Palestinians. All Iraqis now just hate Iran."

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¶6. (C) Comment: Jalil was one of the south's most effective ISF leaders, but his tendency to prosecute criminals regardless of party affiliation no doubt contributed to his current predicament. Jalil always took personal pleasure in his battles with the militias, and it is not surprising that he is adapting poorly to the more sedentary life of a ministry bureaucrat. Regardless of his professional future, he remains a staunch ally of Coalition efforts and a valuable contact. End Comment.

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